

# Past and present of social science education in Hungary

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- Within social studies education in Hungary history and other subjects e.g. civic studies, economics are in a cooperative competitive relationship.
- History and ethics are the only separate school subjects.
- Other content areas are transversal and cross-curricular.
- History is unquestionably the dominant partner as it is one of the compulsory school leaving exam subjects.
- There is no independent initial teacher training for example in civic studies, teachers are educated in the history departments of the teacher training programs.
- Research on actual teaching practice of social studies subjects is scarce.

**Purpose:** We intent to provide a comprehensive picture of Hungarian social science education, to review the constituents of social science literacy, a systematic analysis of the curriculum and its changes since 1989 and of the available research in this field.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The findings are based on the analysis of educational documents (e. g. curricula) and the review of the research publications in the field.

**Findings:** Social science education is cross-curricular in Hungary. Among the different knowledge fields history has a decisive and dominant role. Other social science topics are mostly abandoned in everyday teaching practice. There is a growing centralization of the educational arena (e.g. government approved limited number of textbooks) and a growing emphasis on national identity and patriotism and a decreasing emphasis on Europe. The cross-curricular nature of social science education would require well trained teachers who are able to think critically and in a complex way themselves, however teacher training and classroom practice also support the hegemony of history teaching.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION: WHY TO BE LITERATE IN SOCIAL STUDIES?

Students need to learn about historical, geographical, civic and economic phenomena to understand the societal reality, how society functions what processes shape it and how students can participate in it. The changing socioeconomic situation (e.g. globalisation) nowadays also calls the attention to the need of teaching about societal reality to better understand the world we are living in. Social studies literacy (Löfström et al, 2010) is a broad term which combines the knowledge related to various social science topics (e.g. history, law, psychology, economics, civics) which students should learn to be able to interpret and reflect on the actual societal circumstances and processes shaping the life of local, national and global communities. Factual knowledge about society, beliefs, attitudes, values, skills related to the use of these information and citizenship participation also make an integral part of social science literacy. In Hungary the term social science literacy is not widespread, however the components of this knowledge area are present in the curricula and in the pedagogical thinking. Jakab (2018) wrote about the *cooperative competition* between history teaching and social studies education in Hungary. He interprets their relationship as a competition in modernization between the historical and continental tradition (history as a separate school subject) and the pragmatic Anglo-Saxon educational culture (social studies as an integrative subject, a complex knowledge field). He described that within the written framework curriculum and at the level of educational policy declarations they have a relatively balanced status but in the everyday and actual educational practice of the elementary and secondary schools there is still a hegemony of history teaching and social studies education is hardly present.

This review of Hungarian social science education focuses on its short history after World War Two, how the educational goals of social science education are regulated, what school subjects and activities are related to this area, what way knowledge can be assessed, about textbooks and teacher training and finally the paper provides an overview of the strengths and weaknesses and what research directions help the improvement of this educational field.

## 2 A SHORT HISTORY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

Each society has its own characteristic social science education which is more or less closely connected to its history and its politics. Hungary was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy till the end of the First World War. As a result of the 1848-49 freedom fight against the Habsburgs, Hungary enjoyed a sort of autonomy since 1867. State control over education increased, which resulted in more state schools and compulsory education for children between age 6 and 12. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of nation building, and history education had an important part in transmitting the idea of the Hungarian nation. The Trianon Treaty in 1920 resulted in Hungary losing more than 70% of its territories. This was considered a tragedy for the nation and reinforced the necessity of strengthening the national identity and patriotism. Education in general and history education in particular were dominated by nationalistic approach towards the Hungarian history and had the explicit goal to educate the Hungarian citizen to be ready to fight for the nation.

After the second World War in 1945 a short democratic period started but the democratic aspirations quickly shattered because the power of the Communist Party was growing and finally, in 1948 the party gained control. A totalitarian regime came to power which centralised all area including education (Gyarmati, 2005; Education in Hungary, 2008). The very same year religious education was banned from schools.

From this year, the communist party shaped the tendencies of education. In 1950 the assembly of party members accepted a decree about the need of curriculum reform. They urged the widespread presence of Marxist-Leninist ideology in education. To fulfil this objective the content

of the curricula was expanded. Another important and centralized decision was the introduction of state monopoly of textbook publishing (Kardos, 2003).

In the '50s and at the beginning of the '60s the government was reconfirming the need of strong ideology-driven curriculum to channel students' thinking to the desired direction. The Education Law of 1961 formulates the following statement regarding the direct ideology teaching: "*Schools should teach students according to socialist world view and ethics to be true patriots, virtuous and law-abiding citizens, who truly love our country and people, who serve socialism, peace and who are devoted to the brotherhood of nations, who build and defend the state of people.*" (Education Law of 1961, p. 1., authors' translation) The law also declared that all participants of education (including teachers) must assist this ambition. Important novelty was the introduction of a new subject called *Foundations of Our World View* (*Világnézetünk alapjai*) in the last year of upper secondary schools in 1965. The goal of this subject was the teaching of the desired values and attitudes related to the natural world, to society, morality and politics and to inculcate the "socialist concept of man/citizen". The last central educational act of the totalitarian regime was declared in 1985. The law was revolutionary because it abandoned direct ideology education, it moved towards a more democratic thinking by defining the rights and duties of students and teachers, and it also provided professional autonomy to teachers (Howell, 1988).

At the end of the '80s the control of the Communist Party was weakening, opposition forces got more power and started working on a democratic change. Finally, in 1989 the republic was proclaimed, state monopoly was abolished, a democratic and pluralistic era started. Because of the new political, economic and social conditions, the educational system needed an extensive reform (Gyarmati, 2005; Education in Hungary, 2008). The main aims were liberating education from the ideological bias and decreasing the strong centralization of regulation.

In 1993 the Act on Public Education (Köznevelési Törvény, 1993) was published. It supported the right of parents to decide what kind of general world view, religious or not they want to teach their children. The act declared that state schools cannot be biased towards any ideology or religion. Teachers were not supposed to discuss political issues in school because of avoiding any kind of indoctrination. The law also confirmed the importance of respecting the democratic principles and humanistic values, the promotion of equal opportunities for everyone (Education in Hungary, 2008).

The decentralisation of the education system started but the transition was not straightforward. The Act on Public Education (1993) defined the National Core Curriculum and the school level curricula as the regulators of education. The idea was to make it possible that both central regulation intentions and local initiatives can be realized. But the memories of the centrally controlled system did not disappear easily, and finally a three-level regulation emerged within which mid-level regulators (e.g. framework curricula, elaborated teaching programmes, requirements of the school leaving examination etc.) are also present and they help to reduce the uncertainty of the core curriculum which contains only general goals and does not prescribe every detail of the teaching process (Halász, 2007; Vágó & Vass, 2006).

In the following paragraphs the major changes of curriculum are reviewed and a kind of analysis of official guidelines is provided. The National Core Curriculum (NCC) (Nemzeti alaptanterv, NAT) since the first, published in 1995, has undergone several changes but all versions have some common features. First of all, each version describes the *general educational goals* which should be achieved (Figure 1). The aims have broadened through time, however there are some goals which are consistently present (e.g. promotion of national identity, environmental education, learning to learn, physical and mental health education). The widening of the educational goals represents the will of modernizing the educational system to keep up with the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Subject areas* manifest the second goal structure of the curriculum. The ten subject areas define the main topics students learn in schools. Their name is the same in all version of the NCC, but their content differs. From 2007 the *European key competences* also

appear in the NCC, so the curriculum is enriched with a third goal structure beside general developmental goals and subject areas.

The very notion of “social studies education” and the call for papers published ahead of this issue of the *Journal of Social Science Education*, explicitly mentioning the terms “civic, citizenship, economic, political and/or social education” questions in its premises the organization of the academic and school fields and the disciplinary knowledge produced and taught in France. It is indeed more frequent to refer to “human and social sciences” in higher education and research on the one hand, while on the other hand the centrality of the school subject history and geography has been established in the school system since the 1880s. Therefore, this country report aims to demonstrate that “social studies” are fragmented, not very visible as a whole and sometimes controversial, on the basis of recent curricular changes (in particular the new senior high school – *lycée* – curricula enforced in 2010 and 2019) and some recent publications from different fields of educational research (didactics, sociology, history, etc.).

**Figure 1: General educational goals and subject areas of the different versions of the National Core Curriculum (NCC). The English version of the latest, 2012 National Core Curriculum can be retrieved from the following site: <http://regi.ofi.hu/download.php?docID=5846>**

	NCC 1995	NCC 2003	NCC 2007	NCC 2012
General educational goals	Homeland and people Connection to Europe and the world Environmental education Communication Physical and mental health education Learning to learn Career guidance	Self-concept, self-knowledge Homeland and people European identity and universal culture Becoming European citizens and preserving national identity Environmental education Information and communication technologies Learning to learn Physical and mental health education Preparing to become an adult	Self-concept, self-knowledge Homeland and people European identity and universal culture Education for active citizenship and democracy Economic education Environmental education Learning to learn Physical and mental health education Preparing to become an adult	Ethics Sense of national identity; patriotic education Education for democratic citizenship The development of self-knowledge and community skills Family life education Physical and mental health education Responsibility, volunteering Sustainability and environmental awareness Career guidance Economic and financial education Media literacy Learning to learn
Subject areas	Hungarian language and literature Foreign languages Mathematics Man and society Man and nature The Earth – our environment Arts IT studies Way of life and practical skills Physical education and sports			

The status of social science education has also undergone several adjustments. The NCC 1995 defined *Man and Society* (Ember és társadalom) as an area which covers the topics related to human nature, human culture and society. The general goals of this area were the following:

respecting individuality, promoting national and citizen identity, social sensitivity, openness towards societal issues, environmental protection, tolerance, humanitarian behaviour, learning the knowledge and skills needed to use in democratic institutions. Three general sub-areas were defined: knowledge of human nature (emberismeret), history (történelem), societal and citizenship studies (társadalmi és állampolgári ismeretek). Social science education is mentioned in the text as a general domain which appears in the history curriculum as the general knowledge about the past of the state and society and in the societal and citizenship studies curriculum focusing on the contemporary issues of the society.

In 2000 the Framework Curricula were published (Framework curricula are available online but only in Hungarian: <http://kerettanterv.ofi.hu/>). The documents defined teaching periods, subjects, their contents and their time frame. From the sub-areas of Man and Society only history got an own separate subject from grade 5 to 12. Knowledge of human nature and societal and citizenship studies became modular topics which could be taught separately (37 lesson in grade 7, a total of 72 lessons from grade 9 to grade 12) or as a part of another school subject. In 2001 a study investigating the implementation of the social science modules in secondary education found the following general tendencies: 58 percent of secondary schools started teaching this module in grade 9. More than half of the schools (55%) decided to integrate these modules into a school subject, and in more than 80 percent of the cases this subject was history (Csernyus, 2002). The intention of this curriculum was to introduce a new approach in social science education, but this was not well prepared. Schools and teachers did not get any help how to implement the declared educational goals. Mainly history teachers had to teach the social science topics, but they were also not prepared to fulfil this task (Jakab, 2018).

The latest versions of the framework curricula were accepted in 2012 and it returned to the earliest tradition: only centrally developed versions are accepted and used in schools. A significant change in social science education was in 2013 the introduction of teaching ethics or religion in schools (parents may choose which subject their child should learn). Since the communist take-over in 1948 religion was not a compulsory school subject in public schools in Hungary. The reintroduction of it in state schools has been considered to be a significant conservative shift in the educational area.

The NCC was revised in 2003 and 2007 as well. In 2003 the subject area Man and Society addresses three subtopics: history, knowledge of human nature and social sciences. Only the change in the name of the topics suggests a positive shift towards social science education but the status of the area did not change because the implementation was regulated by the framework curricula which had not changed. However, the introduction of a new school leaving examination in 2005 yielded a positive shift towards the implementation of social science education. Its novelty was that students could choose (1) Social Science, (2) Man, Society and Ethics or (3) Economic Studies as a matriculation subject as well. So even if students did not study them as a separate school subject, because these are cross-curricular themes and are integrated into several different school subjects, they could choose it as an exam subject. Jakab (2018) evaluates this shift positively because this was a step towards strengthening the position of social science education. However, in 2007 the introduction of the European key competences to the core curriculum had a reverse effect on the area because the competences also promote cross-curricular goals.

The current version of the NCC (2012) has new emphases. The general educational goals broadened: the developmental need of community skills, responsibility and volunteering (see community service later), sustainability and media literacy appeared while some other contents changed. The change is the most salient in the case of social science education. In 1995, 2003 and 2007 (before and shortly after Hungary entering the European Union) besides Homeland and People the Connection to Europe/European Identity were among the general educational goals, however in 2012 National Identity and Patriotic Education replaced learning about the homeland and its people, while the explicit goal to be connected to Europe disappeared. This indicates that

the development of students' national identity got more emphasis, while the European dimension became disregarded. The NCC 2007 also indicates Active Citizenship and Democracy as an educational goal but the 2012 NCC removed the expression "active" and simply writes about Education for Democratic Citizenship as a goal. In addition to these, a new area, namely ethics was introduced suggesting a shift towards moral education.

### 3 THE ACTUAL STATUS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

#### 3.1 Curriculum

As mentioned before, the curriculum regulation became multilevel in Hungary at the turn of the millennium: the core curriculum, the framework curricula and schools' local educational programmes regulate the goals, contents and principles of education. The National Core Curriculum (NCC, Nemzeti alaptanterv) summarizes the central educational goals, principles and subject areas compulsory in all schools in Hungary. The last such document was published in 2012. The content of the core curriculum is under revision. A team of researchers and teachers developed a new curriculum; however, it was not embraced by the Ministry of Human Resources responsible for public education. The main criticism was not enough emphasis on patriotic education. The revised version of the NCC was published in the end of 2019. There is a serious debate about the principles and contents of the curriculum, while others welcome the strengthening of patriotic education.

The current NCC consists of three main sections (two of them see in Figure 1) detailing the goals and content areas of education. First, it mentions altogether twelve cross-curricular developmental fields. Six among the 12 are in close connection with social studies education: (1) ethics (2) sense of national identity, patriotic education, (3) education for democratic citizenship (4) economics and financial education (5) responsibility for others, and volunteering (6) sustainability and environmental awareness. Ethics teaching aims at the development of students' moral sense, their ability to handle conflicts of values and understand multiple perspectives. Patriotic education fosters the development of students' national identity which is the basis of the understanding of their place of living and their homeland. Education for democratic citizenship focuses on general citizenship topics such as learning about citizens' rights and duties, developing critical thinking, tolerance and active participation. Economics and financial education focus on teaching finances in relation to households, basic understanding of financial institutions, entrepreneurial knowledge and knowledge about the labour market. Responsibility and volunteering promote students' sensitivity towards disadvantaged groups and their responsibilities as citizens. The goal of sustainability and environmental awareness is to educate students to use resources with awareness, economically and responsibly.

Secondly the NCC also lists the European key competences (European Parliament and Council, 2006, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF>) as general, cross-curricular educational goals of schools. This second goal setting emphasises the importance of developing skills and attitudes needed for participation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however there are coincidences with the general developmental goals (e.g. digital competence – media literacy, efficient and independent learning – learning to learn) which makes the document redundant and not easily transparent. Among the European key competences social and civic competence is related to social science education. The competence is a complex set of knowledge components, attitudes, skills and abilities which aims to foster students' civic knowledge, positive attitudes towards human rights and democracy, problem solving, critical thinking, civic and political participation.

Finally, the document defines subject areas. The main subject area of social science education is called "Man and Society" (Ember és társadalom). Man and Society is an umbrella term and it

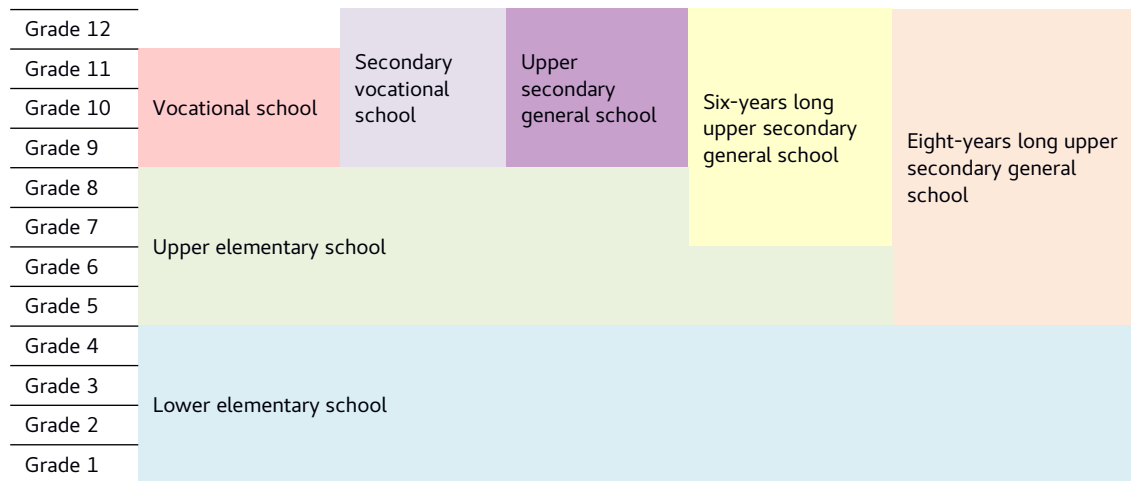


covers several sub-areas, the fields which taught in schools: (1) history, (2) ethics, (3) homeland and its people, (4) society, citizenship and economy and (5) philosophy. It is important to note that the listed areas are not subjects but content areas of social science education. Subjects are defined by the framework curricula (see chapter 3.2). Beyond the general educational goals (defined by the developmental goals and the European key competences), the subject area aims at the promotion of students' insight into historical changes of civilization, culture, mentality and institutions. The new version of the NCC changed the name of this subject area to History and citizenship studies. This change indicates more emphasis on history education and citizenship topics and a turn towards continental tradition (see Jakab, 2018).

Altogether, the NCC specifies the goals of education in three different ways, developmental fields, key competences and subject areas. In most of the cases there is a close connection between the name of the subject area and the actual content to be taught (for example mathematics, foreign languages or physical education etc.). However, in the case of Man and Society there is not one corresponding school subject, this is a broad label which in fact mostly covers history even if it has a broader goal structure as it was demonstrated earlier. The key competences and general developmental goals indicate a more generalised view of education in which the described aims are not only present in one school subject but also can be developed through any of them.

### 3.2 School subjects related to social sciences

The structure of the Hungarian educational system is the following (Figure 2). Students enter school at the age of 6<sup>1</sup> and they are in elementary school from grade 1 to 4. Depending on their academic achievement and availability of such a secondary school in their place of residence children can continue with upper elementary (grade 4 to 8) or start an 8-year-long secondary general school (called gimnázium) already at the age of 10-11 from 5 to 12 grade. They can also take part in a 6+6 system meaning that they are in elementary school until the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and attend the upper secondary general school (gimnázium) from 7 to 12 grade. The most common and traditional is to attend upper secondary general school (gimnázium) from 9 to 12 grade. Those attending the 8- or 6-years long secondary education are the more academically oriented students and these schools typically prepare them for a successful university entrance. Secondary education also entails the upper secondary vocational school (szakgimnázium) or the vocational school (szakközépiskola). The upper secondary general school (gimnázium) and the upper secondary vocational school (szakgimnázium) finishes with the school-leaving/matriculation exam. After taking the school-leaving exam students are free to study in a university or in non-tertiary vocational programmes. In the vocational school (szakközépiskola) students have the choice to finish their learning period by receiving a vocational qualification or to take a school-leaving/matriculation exam. Compulsory education is currently until the age of 16 (10<sup>th</sup> grade) so not all students end their secondary education with taking an exam.

**Figure 2: Elementary and secondary schools in Hungary**

### 3.2.1 Elementary education

The so called Framework Curricula (<http://kerettanterv.ofi.hu/>) determines the school subjects that have to cover the topics that fall under the Man and Society subject area (Fig. 3). In lower elementary school these are: environmental studies and ethics. Environmental studies has topics that are related to both social and natural sciences. Its main goal is to lay the foundation of the children's basic knowledge about the surrounding social and natural environment. Ethics (Erkölcstan) or Religion (Hittan) are compulsory subjects of the elementary school from grade 1 to grade 8. Parents can choose which one of them they want their child to learn. The focus of ethics is to develop the child's personality through learning about social norms and values. If parents choose Religion the church organizes the teaching therefore the content of the lessons is regulated by them.

In upper elementary school the following school subjects cover topics that belong to the Man and Society subject area: history, ethics, ethnography and ethnology and geography. Ethnography and ethnology is about the cultural heritage of Hungarian people, it focuses on the rural life of Hungarians in the 19-20th centuries. This subject is elective and taught only in grade 5. Students learn geography in grade 7 and 8. Out of 90 only five lessons aim at the development of students' basic knowledge of economics, while 20 lessons are dedicated to the geographical, cultural, societal and economic conditions of Hungary.

Finally, according the framework curricula the objective of history education is to develop students' historical knowledge, social science knowledge and citizenship competence. This school subject has many different names based on school types and grades. In upper elementary school (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade) the framework curriculum is called History, Societal and Citizenship Studies (Történelem, Társadalom és Állampolgári Ismeretek). The main goal of teaching and learning history is to evoke interest in the past and make pupils understand that the knowledge of the historical past serves the real understanding of the present and the informed participation in public life. The subject focuses on societal phenomena and includes the knowledge field of



several social sciences including sociology, social psychology, political science law and economy. The analysis of the curriculum reveals that these goals are mainly achieved through teaching Hungarian and world history (mainly the history of Europe). The structure of the curriculum is linear and chronological, so students start with the history of the antiquities and learn about the major events and periods till the modern times. Most of the suggested topics are related to history, however in some grades contemporary citizenship and economic topics are also present. For example, in grade 7-8 37 lessons are proposed to be devoted to globalization, the European integration, the Hungarian democracy, societal rules, citizenship and finances.

For those academically gifted students who attend the 8-year-long secondary/grammar school which starts in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade apart from history a separate subject called Societal, Citizenship and Economics Studies is available in grade 5 and 6. Lessons are dedicated to basic concepts and characteristics of historical space and time, the understanding and use of historical sources, the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nation and ethnicities, multiculturalism, economics and citizenship. In their case Societal, Citizenship and Economic studies returns as an optional subject in grade 11-12 with similar topics like in grade 5-6 (Győri, 2019).

**Figure 3: Grade 1-8 school subjects related to social science education with number of suggested lessons and grades**

School subjects	Grades							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Elementary school subjects (lower and upper)								
Environmental studies (132 lessons)								
Ethics/Religion (258 lessons)								
Ethnography and ethnology (32 lessons)								
Geography (90 lessons)								
History, societal and citizenship studies (260 lessons)								
Eight year-long upper secondary general school								
Societal, citizenship and economic studies (128 lessons)								

Note: green colour indicates obligatory subjects, orange indicates optional school subjects

### 3.2.2 Secondary education

In different upper secondary school types students learn social science topics under different names and in different grades (Figure 4). In the traditional and most widespread (4-years-long, 9-12 grade) upper secondary general schools (gimnázium) the curriculum defines a subject called History, Societal and Citizenship Studies (Történelem, Társadalmi és Állampolgári Ismeretek) as an obligatory subject and its structure and content is similar to the elementary school curriculum. The topics follow each other chronologically from the antiquities to the modernity. In grade 11-12 a total of 32 lessons are dedicated to social science topics (e.g. globalization, the European Union, Hungarian democracy and society, citizenship, finances).

Although the secondary vocational schools (szakgimnázium) have separate framework curriculum its content corresponds with the curriculum of the upper secondary general schools.

Finally, in vocational schools (szakközépiskola) students learn Social Studies (Társadalomismeret) in grade 9-10. This curriculum differs significantly from the previous ones because it rather focuses on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while more than one third (46 lessons) of the lessons are dedicated to social science topics.

Ethics is taught in upper secondary general schools and secondary vocational schools also in the last two years. The situation of geography is complicated. It is a separate subject in upper secondary general schools, its aim is enriching students' knowledge of the economic and societal circumstances of Hungary, Europe and the world. Sustainability and global economic processes and challenges are also discussed during the lessons. In the secondary vocational schools and vocational schools geography is not a separate subject, it is part of the complex natural science subject which also includes biology, physics and chemistry topics. Economics is not a separate school subject in the upper secondary school (gimnázium), but there are vocational secondary schools which specialize themselves to economic and business studies. The comparison of the secondary school types unveils the differences in social science learning opportunities. Upper secondary general school students have various social science related subjects offering more chance and time to learn social sciences. The comparison also highlights that with less available subjects and time, vocational school students learn about the least diverse social science topics. However, their Societal Studies course differs the most from the traditional history subjects of other school types. The newly published version of the NCC returns to the prescriptive curricula tradition, furthermore it defines not just subject areas but specific subjects as well. The approved new NCC not just changed the name of the social science subject area to History and citizenship studies but a major change is that the joint framework curricula suggests a separate subject for Citizenship studies in grade 8 and grade 12 with one lesson per week. Another significant change will be the omitting of Ethics from upper secondary general schools.

**Figure 4. Secondary school subjects related to social science education with number of suggested lessons and grades**

Secondary school subjects	Grades			
	9	10	11	12
Upper secondary general school				
History, Societal and Citizenship Studies (303 lessons)				
Ethics (28 lessons)				
Geography (129 lessons)				
Societal, Citizenship and Economical studies (61 lessons, in case of the eight-year-long grammar schools)				
Secondary vocational school				
History, Societal and Citizenship Studies (345 lessons)				
Ethics (31 lessons)				
Vocational school				
Societal Studies (108 lessons)				

Note: green colour indicates obligatory subjects, orange indicates optional school subjects

Based on the NCC social science education is an important area of education. As it was described before six of the twelve listed main educational fields are related to social science education. Citizenship competence also appears as a key competence.

The Man and Society subject area outlines the framework of complex social science literacy, but only history and ethics have a separate school subject, the other areas are embedded in these subjects. In practice this means that most of the lessons are dedicated to teaching history and only a small number of the lessons are suggested to be on other social science topics (only 32-37 out of more than 300). In the case of the more academically oriented eight-year-long upper secondary general school students learn more about social science topics but only at the beginning of their studies in grade 5-6, while in later grades the subject is optional. Teaching ethics gets emphasis in elementary school (258 lessons from grade 1 to grade 8 means one lesson per week), while in secondary education students learn this topic only in selected grades with a low number of lessons. These circumstances call attention to the fact that success of social science education mainly depends on history and ethics teachers. Therefore, they need interdisciplinary knowledge and social science education related educational practices to implement social science education.

### 3.3 Community service

The compulsory Community Service was introduced in 2012 for those students who study in the upper secondary school or in the secondary vocational school. Students have to perform 50 hours of community service as a precondition of obtaining the school-leaving exam. The first students who completed this service took their school-leaving exam in 2017. The aim of community service is community building, fostering students' pro-social behaviour (e.g. volunteering, tolerance), orienting the participants towards the labour market and promoting active citizenship participation. The community service activities can be arranged in school (e. g. cleaning the classroom, helping other students during the year) but there is an opportunity to visit local programmes and organizations and participate in their activities. During the completion of community service schools should support students through lessons preparing them to take part in the programme, helping them to find the field and institution where they can spend their community service and finally summarize their experiences (Bodó, 2015a, 2015b).

Some schools could implement community service easier than others. Research shows that successful implementation depends on the following factors: the headmaster's supportive attitude, cooperation among teachers, shared views and goals of teachers, school climate that promotes innovation, finally the capacity of the organization and the individual. Besides these factors the effective implementation of the programme is defined by how teachers can translate the general goals of community service to local activities and outcomes. This requires a new concept of teaching and learning which is unfamiliar for most of the teachers (Bodó, 2015b; Molnár, 2015).

A representative study investigating grade 12 students' perception of community service revealed that 31% of the participants received no feedback on their service. 45% never participated in reflective lessons where the personal experiences were discussed. 47% reported positive evaluation of their community service, they felt they did something useful during their work, at the same time only 30% enjoyed his/her work. The aim of the program is fostering students' pro-social behaviour and volunteering, so they were also asked if they want to do volunteer work in the future. Surprisingly, only 19% reported yes regarding this intention (Bodó, Markos, Mézes, Sárosi & Szalóki, 2018). The outcomes of the study suggests that the implementation of community service has some barriers. The first experiences indicate the need of further help for teachers to better understand the aims of school community service and be

able to better realize the educational programme for their students who as a result can get better impression about volunteering.

### 3.4 Knowledge assessment

Assessing students' performance related to history, social sciences and citizenship is not a flourishing research area. The requirements can be assessed with tests, but these assessment methods can only gather information about students' knowledge and skills, while no information can be collected about students' values, attitudes and behaviours. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only a couple of national and a few regional assessments were carried out, but they only focused on the requirements of history education (Kinyó & Molnár, 2012). Hungary only participated in the CIVED Study in 1999, ten years after the system change, since then there are no comparative data about the achievement of students. At that time the Hungarian students' societal/civic knowledge achievement was like the international average, and it was the same as the Norwegian, Czech, Slovenian, Danish, German, Russian, English, Swedish and Bulgarian participants' (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schulz, 2001). Kinyó (2013) assessed students' citizenship knowledge (e.g. democratic institutions, democratic principles, discrimination) based on the IEA CIVED study in grade 7 and grade 11. He found that students' knowledge increased only moderately during these years, most of what they knew had to learn earlier. This outcome called the attention to the need of investigating younger students. It was also found that students' achievement level differs significantly and explained greatly by their parents' education level.

Another study (Kinyó & Dancs, 2015) examined elementary school student's (from grade 1 to grade 6) level of knowledge of social science and citizenship topics (such as civic rights and duties, orienting in time, important personalities of the Hungarian history) defined by the NCC subject area of Man and Society. The study used computer-based assessment. Students' performance ranged between 45-70%. The study also proved that computer-based assessment is applicable in this age cohort to reliably assess students' civic knowledge level.

The development of students' national feelings and their knowledge about national culture are in the spotlight of the curricula. Systematic assessment of students' national identity was only accomplished among elementary school students' in the recent years (Dancs, 2016, 2018, 2019). Tests assessing students' knowledge of Hungarian national symbols were developed based on teachers' suggestions and the curricula. The outcomes revealed that students' knowledge level increases with grade, so they know more about the important Hungarian historical events, territories and historical personalities the longer they are in the educational system. The connection between students' strength of national identity and their knowledge level was also investigated. According to the results there is only a weak to moderate correlation between students' knowledge and the strength of their national identity and in higher grades the correlation is gradually decreasing confirming that national identity is a more complex phenomenon than being simply proportionate with the knowledge about the national past and present (Dancs, 2018, 2019).

Except these studies there are no large-scale assessments about students' performance. More large-scale investigations needed to collect reliable data about students' achievement level. However, the assessment culture of history and social science topics need a significant improvement to reach this goal. The cited researches are not representative so their findings cannot be generalized, but they give a new perspective on how these areas can be assessed. The findings of citizenship and social science performance levels indicate that socioeconomic status is an important factor behind students' different performances. International comparative studies (e.g. PISA studies) revealed the growing selectivity of the Hungarian school system which means that school cannot help disadvantaged students to reduce their drawback (Csapó, Fejes, Kinyó &

Tóth, 2019). It is reasonable to suggest that in students' social science and citizenship achievement level there are enormous differences as well.

### 3.5 School leaving or matriculation exam

The only nationally accredited way to assess students' knowledge is the school leaving or matriculation exam. This exam could serve as a proxy of social studies literacy criteria (Löfström et al, 2010) but the exam questions have been never studied from this aspect by researchers. Hungarian secondary school students must take altogether five school leaving/matriculation exams at the end of their studies (it is not obligatory for vocational school students): four of them, mathematics, literature and Hungarian grammar, history, one foreign language are obligatory, while students can freely select the fifth subject. Furthermore, students can choose the level of their matriculation exam (standard or advanced level). Some social science topics are integrated into the history exam requirements. Among the twelve listed history topics only two are related to citizenship and economics the others are about Hungarian or world history. The exam requirements detail the assessed skills: (1) critical use of historical sources, including comparison of the sources, reproduction and use of factual knowledge of historical figures and events (2) the use of proper terminology, (3) orientation in space and time and (4) critical and problem-oriented thinking.

The exam has two parts at both the standard and the advanced level: a written and an oral one. The written part consists of two different type of tasks: a test but students may use written and visual historical sources while answering the questions; and an essay part (two long and two short essays) about historic periods and events using historical sources. The oral exam is a presentation of a topic which the students randomly get at the exam from a pool of topics that they could prepare for in advance.

All secondary school students must learn history and take a matriculation exam in it however social science related exams are only optional, and only a small proportion of students participate in them. Among the eligible subjects is Social Studies (Társadalomismeret) which consists of the following subject matters: the individual and the community, societal relations, civic knowledge, contemporary issues, economic and financial knowledge. The exam assesses the following outcomes: does the student know the basic social science notions, can he or she formulate his or her own opinion, can he or she think critically about social science topics. Before the exam the student selects an essay topic (from the previously centrally defined ones) then it is realized through a written (e.g. essay), visual (e.g. short film) or community project (e.g. organizing an event). At the standard level the initially accomplished project, the presentation of the project and the oral exam are assessed. At the advanced level the exam has the same structure as in history: a written (test) and an oral part (presenting a topic from a list of previously published topics).

The exam of Man, Society and Ethics (Ember- és Társadalomismeret, Etika) is also eligible. The subject matters of the examination partly overlap with the topics of the social studies exam, because family life, economic issues, society, rights and duties, public affairs, European Union, national culture and globalization are present in both. This exam puts more emphasis on morality, the learning about moral issues (e.g. values and conflicts because of different value-orientations, basic rules and laws of living in a community). The fulfilment of the exam is similar too: the examinee prepares a written, visual or community project which is presented at the exam. While there are written and published exam requirements for the advanced level exam too, surprisingly it is not possible for the examinees to choose this level.

The final social science related school-leaving exam is Economic Studies (Gazdasági Ismeretek). The examination focuses on basic economic notions (e.g. money, market, consumerism, enterprises) and at the standard level requires examinees to create a project and present a topic. On advanced level examinees can choose whether they want to create a project or write a test. If

the project is chosen, the oral part is about presenting the results of the project and an economic topic. If the test is chosen, the oral part consists of introducing an economic topic and presenting and analysing a current economic event. It is somewhat controversial that economics apart from some specialized vocational secondary schools is not a separate school subject still it is an eligible school leaving exam subject.

The statistics of the school-leaving exams (<https://www.ketszintu.hu/publicstat.php>) show the number of participants taking the standard level Social Science Studies exam decreased significantly in 2017. In 2016 a total of 2502, in 2017 a total of 1332 students chose this exam (3,61% and 1,99% of total number of students taking an exam). The causes of this decline are not known. The number of those students who chose the Man, Society and Ethics exam has also decreased slightly (283 in 2016, 210 in 2017 and 225 in 2018). The Economics Studies exam shows similar patterns. In 2019 a total of 1908 students took an exam in Social Sciences or Economics which is 2,87% of the total number of students taking part in school-leaving exams.

The school-leaving exams are not just important because of giving feedback on students' achievement and they also function as the entrance exam to university but because the requirements of the exams give valuable information to teachers on the expected learning outcomes. This is the case in Finland where the core curricula only detail the general goals and the requirements therefore the school-leaving exams help to outline the expected outcomes (Löfström, Virta & van den Berg, 2010). If the Hungarian exams are evaluated from this perspective the following can be stated. The requirements of the History exam indicate that the exam mainly evaluates students' history related factual knowledge and skills, because general social science topics are hardly included. The proportion of the different topic requirements suggests to history teachers that the expected educational outcome of history teaching is related mainly to the general teaching goals of history (teaching about the past) and it is not important to pay attention to the integrative view of social sciences because that kind of knowledge is not evaluated at the exam.

### 3.6 Civic organizations participating in social science education – non-formal education

Social science education is also present outside the formal educational system, Civic organizations, NGO's and voluntary groups are engaged not only in supporting general societal issues but also in promoting social science education outside schools. After the political changes in 1989, a great number of non-governmental organizations started to offer different kinds of education, mainly in terms of civics, democracy, and economics (e.g. Civitas-Association for Education for Civic Knowledge and Skills [http://real.mtak.hu/62188/1/EPA00011\\_i\\_skolakultura\\_1998\\_01\\_MIII-MXX.pdf](http://real.mtak.hu/62188/1/EPA00011_i_skolakultura_1998_01_MIII-MXX.pdf); Junior Achievement Hungary (<http://ejam.hu/>) which offers to educate economic and legal knowledge and entrepreneurial and financial skills and competences etc.). Exactly 30 years after the political changes the number of the organizations which offer such kind of education decreased dramatically (for example Civitas does not exist anymore), partly because the mission of these civic organizations was to promote the democratic transition and the transition from a state controlled economy to a market economy. This task was believed to be accomplished when Hungary entered the European Union in 2004. The need for non-formal education, outside the more and more centralized formal education has been growing recently however new legislations make it difficult for NGO's supported by international funds or sources to exist (<https://hclu.hu/en/articles/what-is-the-problem-with-the-hungarian-law-on-foreign-funded-ngos>). This means that social science education, especially civic education is not well addressed in the formal educational system and not that widely addressed as it used to be before Hungary entering the EU in the non-formal scene either.

The list of the currently active organizations cannot be exhaustive only some examples are presented. Amnesty International Magyarország (Hungary) (<https://oktatas.amnesty.hu/website>) offers schools special lessons related to human rights education. Teachers, students and parents



can request free lessons which cover a wide range of topics. The offered lessons aim to promote students' democratic values and positive attitudes towards peaceful conflict resolution and human rights, students' knowledge of the different forms of bullying in school and hate crimes. Contrary to traditional teaching methods, the lectures of the organization are designed using new and alternative methods (e.g. drama- pedagogy, discussion of personal narratives). *Demokratikus Ifjúságért Alapítvány*, DIA (Foundation for Democratic Youth, <https://i-dia.org/en/>) is a foundation working on facilitating students' democratic values and activities. It offers freely accessible books for teachers how to teach and develop democratic debate skills and how to practice innovative teaching methods. They organize nationwide democratic debate competitions, they developed a board game to foster debate skills and they have several many other projects that promote active learning about contemporary societal issues. They organized trainings for teachers to prepare the successful implementation of school community service or a competition for university students where they had to suggest innovative approaches to solve societal problems (Galambos, 2019).

The Network of Human Rights Educators (Emberi Jogi Nevelők Hálózata, <http://ejha-halozat.hu/index.php/2019/03/27/ejha-network-of-human-rights-educators/>) is an organization of educators who are devoted to promote human rights education, solidarity and active citizenship. Members of the network are teachers, trainers, students, activists, peer counsellors, social workers and all professionals who are interested in human rights education and related fields (e.g. citizenship, intercultural and peace education). The network offers a community (e.g. conferences, meetings, programmes) for those who are interested in these topics, teaching materials and support for educators. On their webpage they offer a list of board and card games, books and other materials developed for human rights education. The latest publication of the network suggests lesson plans fostering the learning of human rights and the development of tolerance, environmental protection and safe online media use.

According to a non-representative investigation of the Network of Human Right Educators most of the schools in Hungary do not have any or have only very loose connection with civic organizations which are related to human rights education and this effects not only the potential cooperation but also the visibility and accessibility of the teaching materials prepared for teachers (Emberi jogi nevelés 2018 gyorsjelentés, 2018).

### 3.7 Textbooks

In 2013 the maintenance of public education institutions (schools) was taken over by the Ministry of Human Capacities from the local authorities. By this the education system became more centralized including the textbook market. Only those textbooks can be used which were approved by the Educational Authority. (The list of all approved and non-approved textbooks can be found in the website of the Education Authority [https://www.oktatas.hu/pub\\_bin/dload/kozoktatas/tankonyvjegyzek/kirtkv2019\\_kozlony\\_190611.pdf](https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/kozoktatas/tankonyvjegyzek/kirtkv2019_kozlony_190611.pdf)). This change resulted in a dramatic reduction of the number of approved textbooks.

History is in the best position because teachers can choose between two different textbooks and workbooks for each grade from 5 to 12. In the case for example of ethics textbooks in grade 1-4 and in secondary school teachers can choose from two textbooks but between grade 5 and grade 8 only one option is available (Figure 5). School book publishers successfully appealed the European Court of Human rights in Strasbourg to be compensated after the state monopolization of the school book market (<https://hungarytoday.hu/strasbourg-hungary-school-textbooks/>).

A textbook reform also started during which "new generation of textbooks" (újgenerációs tankönyvek) so called "experimental textbooks" (kísérleti tankönyvek) were developed. They are student focused, they apply a wide range of educational methods also make use of new technologies. They are called "experimental" because from the 2014/15 academic year they have

been introduced in a certain number of schools and teachers, parents and students have been expected to provide feed-back on their implementation and their actual contribution to teaching and learning. Unfortunately, several of the new textbooks were criticized firmly because some of them (e.g. the atlas used in history education) contained massive mistakes. The Association of History Teachers (Történelemtanárok Egyesülete, TTE, <https://tte.hu/english>) pointed to these mistakes and they are under correction (<http://ujkor.hu/content/mibol-tanulnak-majd-11-esek-egy-friss-tankonyvelemzes-tanulsagai>).

Parallel to the new textbook development project the National Public Education Portal (Nemzeti Köznevelési Portál <https://portal.nkp.hu/>) provides interactive digital teaching and learning material for teachers, students and parents in each subject area including history and social studies.

**Figure 5: Social science related textbooks: a) Social, Citizenship and Economic Studies textbook for grade 5 students of the 8-year-long secondary school; b) History Workbook for grade 6, c) Geography textbook for grade 8; d) Social Studies workbook for grade 9 vocational students; e) Ethics textbook for grade 11 secondary students; f) History textbook for grade 12 secondary students**



Outside the officially approved textbooks as it is mentioned in the previous section some civic organizations also support social science education through developing teaching materials and offering training for students and teachers as well. However, the number of teachers and students who actually participate and make use of these materials is limited.

### 3.8 Teacher education

Hungarian higher education of teachers joined the European Higher Education Area as a result of the Bologna process in 2008 but by 2012 it was recognized by the Ministry of Human Capacities that in teacher education the BA/BSc and MA/MSc structure does not work. From 2013 teacher education has been again non-divided and lasts for 4+1 year in-service training (300 credits) for elementary school teachers, 5+1 year in-service training (360 credits) for secondary school teachers. By the end of their studies all students receive a Master Degree. In case of the Man and Society subject area the following teacher qualifications can be gained: teacher of History and Civics, teacher of Philosophy, teacher of Ethics and Moral Philosophy, teacher of Ethnography and Ethnology, teacher of Library and Information Service, teacher of Community Education. Students have to choose two majors for example History and Civics and Hungarian literature and grammar or History and Civics and Philosophy. There are no independent chairs for civic and citizenship education in universities in Hungarian teacher training faculties. Future History and Civic Studies teachers (*történelem és állampolgári ismeretek tanár*) all study in the History Departments or the History Institutes of the universities which are accredited for teacher training. This means that the focus of the studies is history and there are hardly any subjects in relation to citizenship education. Teachers are experts in history rather than in social sciences and not well prepared to teach complex and contemporary topics. According to Jakab (2018) the integration of social studies into history education at the university level questions the possibility to establish proper social science education in schools.

The learning outcomes of teacher education is defined by an educational regulation accepted in 2013 by the Ministry of Human Capacities (EMMI <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1300008.emm>). The document describes the expected knowledge, attitudes, skills and responsibilities which university students should have at the end of their studies. There are general (apply to all students) and specific outcomes. For example, teachers of history and civics have to learn the acceptance of democratic values, the respect of personal and human rights, the basic civic, financial and economic knowledge, the goal structure of the curricula. The document does not mention any specific educational practices only the need to link the past and present events regarding society, citizenship and economics. The expected learning outcomes of ethics teacher include moral conscience, responsibility, respecting human rights, tolerance, empathy, openness, critical thinking, helpfulness, support for sustainability and national identity.

### 3.9 Educational practice, educational methods

History is the “queen” of social studies and all other knowledge fields have an inferior role. If a knowledge domain is not a distinct subject that indicates a lower prestige and less educational infrastructure.

As a result of the shortcomings of the teacher education in the field of social science domains future teachers have difficulties to develop a complex view of society therefore they focus mainly on events of the past and important developmental processes of society are not discussed in-depth (Kinyó & Molnár, 2012). Teachers have difficulties to construct coherent analytic perspectives on political and economic issues. For example as a result of civic and citizenship education being not a separate subject there are no compulsory prescriptions exactly how many lessons should be devoted to these topics. Actual implementation largely depends on the interest and willingness of teachers in each school. While a certain number of lessons can be devoted for example to civic education within the history curriculum of the last year of secondary school, history teachers always struggle with oversized curriculum therefore learning about and discussing contemporary topics and controversial social issues are regularly skipped (Szabó & Dancs, 2018; Fülöp, 2019). It is also a widespread expectation among parents that all politics and public life related topics are undesirable in schools. Teachers do not want to confront

parents and also reluctant to deal with e.g. political concepts and topics (Fülöp, 2019). The past is considered to be many to be a “safer place”. There is a pragmatic aspect as well. In the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the upper secondary school and secondary vocational school prepare for the school leaving/university entrance exam. Civic studies constitute only a fragment of the History and Civics subject and it is not very probable that they are part of the exam material. Therefore they are just simply forgotten about in most schools because these studies do not have pragmatic significance and only little personal benefit in terms of further studies or employability.

A non-representative study investigating the human rights education practices of schools and teachers revealed the following. According to 28% of teachers, human rights are mainly discussed in history classes, 17% reported the homeroom teacher class, 15% reported ethics classes. Quarter of schools organizes school days dedicated to human rights, while one third of schools places posters, news or competition calls related to human rights education. Nearly all school have a students' council but most of the cases students do not really have a voice to influence decisions (Emberi jogi nevelés 2018 gyorsjelentés, 2018).

According to Jakab (2006) history and social studies have different educational culture, require different approach. When teaching historical events students do not have their own personal experiences which can be utilized, but in the case of social science topics these everyday experiences should be taken into consideration. Social studies are embedded into a democratic educational style which implies a more active participation of students therefore in addition to transmitting knowledge it focuses on the development of attitudes and skills. According to this approach students will become responsibly thinking and acting citizens only in case they take an active role in the student bodies, civic organizations etc. The traditional history teaching canon considers the school a place which does not have a strong connection with the actual present day society. This is a hierarchical and more authoritative conceptualization of the teacher-student, school-student relationship which considers the school years as a passive preparation for the future active citizen life. During the school years students listen and accumulate and reproduce knowledge what they gain from the teacher as a professional authority and when they „enter society” after finishing their education they will put into practice what they learned.

The CIVED Study carried out in 1999, more than 20 years ago was the last and basically only one which investigated systematically Hungarian social studies teachers' views on citizenship education. The great majority of them (72%) expressed the need for better teaching materials, 53% expressed the need of more instructional time and 52% felt that more training would be necessary about the content of teaching. Majority of teachers (78%) agreed that citizenship education should be integrated into social sciences and only 49% supported a separate subject. They also expressed that the focus of citizenship education had been on transmitting knowledge (71%), while more emphasis should be on critical thinking (39%) and education of values (28%) (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schulz, 2001).

There is no research data available about the most common educational methods teachers apply when teaching history and other social science subjects. Generally, traditional teaching methods prevail in the majority of Hungarian schools (i.e. frontal teaching), cooperative learning techniques are not widespread and this does not encourage sharing opinions freely and critical collaborative discussions. Skills and motivation to deal consciously, actively and critically with social issues are not developed by a variety of teaching methods in the public school context i.e. sociodrama, organized debates, project work etc. (Fülöp, 2019).

The Societal, Citizenship and Economic Studies textbooks prepared for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade of the 8-year-long secondary school however recommend a variety of innovative teaching and learning methods. There are warming-up tasks, individual work, working in pairs and in small groups. In each section of the book there is a real life example or a fictive case and students are encouraged to role-play in order to understand the different actors' perspective. The textbook has the concept that the student is an active learner and an active agent of knowledge acquisition. In the



last ten years, however this subject was taught and these textbooks used only in one 8-year-long uppers secondary general schools all over Hungary (Győri, 2019).

Several reasons can be hypothesized behind the lack of research. First, exploring teachers' practices can be hard because the participants can feel they are evaluated which can be threatening. There is no culture of evaluation being a joint problem-focused process which is rather for the constructive development of the evaluated person than for judgement. Questionnaires can reduce this frustration, but their outcomes depend more on the participants' subjectivity. Direct observation or action research can be another approach but, in this case, teachers can more intensively feel an 'evaluative taste' during the data collection. This situation underpins the need of more conscious and well-prepared educational research investigating teachers' views about social science education and their related classroom practices.

### 3.10 Research on attitudes, values and participation

A general aim of teaching social science and citizenship topics is preparing students for effective participation in society. The value transmitting role of the school has changed a lot in the past decades. After the change of regime, democracy and national values gained significant emphasis in the NCC. Schools' local curricula define the values which are in the focus of the institution and which are endorsed by teachers during their classroom activity. Schools run by different educational programs (e.g. traditional versus alternative schools) and maintainers (e.g. state, churches, foundations) advocate various values, but their common point is fostering love, tolerance and empathy (Zsolnai & Lesznyák, 2012).

The effect (or rather non-effective nature) of social studies education can be indirectly assessed by researching young people's attitudes, values and participation. The present short summary is not exhaustive at all but wants to provide an impression about this aspect of social science education.

The Hungarian Youth Study has been carried out since 2000 each fourth year on a representative sample of 15-29 years-old. The last, 2016 study indicated a significant decrease over the years in interest towards politics and public issues. In 2016 only 2 percent of the young people were very interested in politics while 64% of them was not interested at all. There was somewhat more interest in public issues, still almost half (47%) indicated non-interest. The study seemed to confirm the widely accepted notion that the primary socialization agent in terms of values and attitudes towards societal issues is the family. Altogether almost half (43%) of the young people fully agreed with both of his/her parents in political views and only three to five percent totally opposed them. This means that young Hungarians tend to reproduce their parents' civic and political attitudes and educational institutions do not have a formative effect (Szabó, 2018). This may be partly the consequence of the previously described school practice which expects teachers not to touch in the classroom contemporary and especially controversial societal issues.

Based on the same dataset Mráz (2018) analysed young Hungarians' political value preferences and voting behaviour. Almost half and half of the young participants were satisfied (44%) and dissatisfied (47%) with the political system in Hungary, and the proportion of those who think that democracy is better than any other political system has been steadily growing over the years from 48% in 2008 to 63% in 2016. It was also found that the most interested in politics are those young people who consider themselves right-wing, conservative and nationalistic and those who are urban, European oriented and endorse more liberal or left-wing views. The least interested in politics are those young people who have a very low SES.

A comparative study of European adolescents set up a typology of attitudes towards citizenship activities. Four different patterns were identified: the *alienated individualist* who is only concerned about his/her personal interest (41% of the participants belonged to this category), the *alienated politician* who has low level of national identity and is not interested in voting or civic activities

but is ready to be involved in community affairs (24%), the *apolitical activist* who is interested in civic issues but not interested in politics. Only a small group of young people belonged to the political activists (11%) who are interested in both political and community affairs (Szabó & Dancs, 2018).

Ridley and Fülöp (2014) interviewed Hungarian secondary school students about their attitudes towards being socially-politically active. In these interviews the young people frequently perceived themselves and their peers as non-citizens. Politics was depicted as an adult's world which is not suitable for young people. This reflects the traditional history education position: while in school students just passively accumulate knowledge and when they leave the school and reach the legal adult age then they can start to put into practice what they learned, only then they become citizens who have a word in social-political issues.

The general aim of the curriculum is to promote respect for human rights, democracy, diversity and privacy, fostering students' positive attitudes towards civic participation, other cultures, and sustainability. It seems that the social science education is not very successful in reaching the goals in terms attitudes and competences and participation. More investigations are needed to better explore and understand the value transmitting role of school, factors affecting students' attitudes towards civic participation. The results of such research may facilitate new approaches of social science education for teachers.

#### 4 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Hungarian educational system has undergone significant changes. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a centralised, strongly ideology-driven curricula regulated schools. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought a democratic change leaving direct ideology-driven curricula. The new, pluralistic viewpoint abandoned teaching students only one way of thinking about the world, rather it supported thinking about society from different perspectives. Social science education evoked bad memories, but the curricular reform tried to cleanse this memory and lay new foundations. Unfortunately, the core curriculum and the related framework curricula has undergone several changes which make it hard for teachers to follow and adapt to the new circumstances.

The original idea of policy makers was redefining social science education but the long traditions of history teaching proved stronger: the core curriculum defined social science education as part of a subject area but when the curriculum was translated to school subjects social sciences did not get an own subject rather their knowledge field was integrated into other subjects (mainly into history). Teachers were not prepared for the integration which questions the effectiveness of the implementation. This move can be interpreted as the survival and further dominance of traditional social science education which is dominated by transmitting the common culture and facts about society fostering the development of national identity and patriotism (Fallace, 2017).

The introduction of the new two-level school-leaving exam had positive consequences for social science education: three exams were introduced (among the optional ones). The description of social science exams further detailed the requirements of social science education making the goals clearer for teachers. In addition, the requirements of the exams (e.g. creating a project) reflected an opening towards disciplinary and progressive approach of social science education. Finally, the school-leaving exam gives students liberty to choose the fifth subject of their exam. Beside compulsory history exam they can choose from three different exams which cover various aspects of social science education (Societal Studies, Man, Society, Ethics and Economics). Unfortunately, only a small percentage of students choose these exams. The requirements of the compulsory history exam provide a feed-back about what kind of historical



knowledge and thinking is the required learning outcome, what is assessed. This results in a reduced importance of other social science topics.

All versions of the national core curriculum preserved the cross-curricular nature of social science education. The cross-curricular approach makes sense because the real world is also complex, it cannot be separated into distinct subjects. The realization of social science education this way can help students to better understand the complexity of the world, the connections among disciplines. This teaching approach can only be effective if teachers are prepared to fulfil this task, however, it seems that teacher education is not preparing the trainee teachers for this task. The document defining the outcomes of history teacher training only mentions a few general social science related learning outcomes. The curricula integrate some social science topics (mainly citizenship topics) into history teaching but a closer look on the expected outcomes of history teacher training is not convincing.

A positive shift towards social science education is the enrichment of the national core curriculum with goals related to this area. The appearance of European key competences (including social and civic competence), the general educational goal of education for democratic citizenship, responsibility, volunteering and ethics suggest the growing importance of social science literacy. At the same time, disturbing changes can be seen. The importance of the European dimension declined, fostering the common European identity was omitted from the curriculum, while patriotic education appeared among the goals. This can be interpreted as a return and reconfirmation of the dominance of history education among social science topics. Meanwhile other topics of social sciences (e.g. contemporary global issues, civic rights and duties, economics) are still mainly integrated into history education.

The introduction of the compulsory community service represents a new approach towards promoting values, attitudes and behaviours linked to social science literacy. The program is quite new, the first students who completed it have just finished their secondary studies in the recent years. The first outcomes of the program are upsetting because the school support of community service is not provided to all students and most of them evaluates their experiences rather negatively.

The research field of social science education offers vast opportunities for researchers. Some studies investigate aspects of social science literacy, but systematic evaluation of the field, students' attitudes and skills are absent. At the same time, the overview of the curricula indicates the importance of history teachers in social science education. In spite of this, scarce information is available about them: what they think about the field, how they try to implement the curricula goals in the classroom, what approaches and practices they use.

## 5 SUGGESTED DIRECTION OF IMPROVEMENT

As a conclusion of this summary of social science education in Hungary some ideas are suggested how to improve social science education based on the weaknesses detailed in the previous chapter.

*Clear definition of social science education in the core curriculum.* The consensus of the Hungarian society is needed, on recognizing the importance of social science education among other relevant areas. As science literacy or ICT literacy are mutually general educational goals of the curriculum, the developmental need of social science literacy should be also added. The PISA global competence assessment demonstrates a shift towards the developmental need of social science literacy which is the basis of understanding and acting on local, national and global level as well. The elements of social science literacy (e.g. civic competence, education for democracy, volunteering) are present in different parts of the curriculum (e.g. general goals, key competences, subject areas), but the explicit formulation of this goal is lacking. The clear

definition of this aim would raise the importance of the field, foster more related research and make it more apparent for teachers that it is a cross-curricular area of school.

*More help for educators to teach social science literacy.* As a cross-curricular approach all teachers have to work on the development of students' social science literacy. More investigation is needed to understand their concept of social science education which can be utilized to give them the needed help. In absence of these studies it can be only suggested that they need more support to recognize the importance of the literacy, to perceive the connection between their subject and social science education and learn new ideas of teaching this complex field. Based on the outcomes, trainings and other supportive materials can be produced. Furthermore, the relationship between civic organizations and schools should be strengthened to utilize the outcomes of non-formal learning. These organizations collected valuable experiences regarding social science education which should be shared with more teachers.

*Rethinking history teaching and teacher training.* At this moment, history teaching is the main area of social science education. The traditional teaching approach which has characterized Hungarian history education and which was fit with a pre-information society is no longer adequate. Instead of the descriptive, teacher focused teaching practice a much more pro-active and interactive, problem-oriented, skill-based, project-based educational approach would be needed which at the same time utilizes the new technologies. Some elements of social science education (e.g. the optional social science subjects in the school-leaving exam; new generation experimental textbooks) represent this trend, but others (e.g. framework curricula, history school-leaving exam) not. A widespread discussion is needed among researchers, teachers and teacher trainees to redefine history education and its classroom practices.

*More academic research related to social science literacy.* The previously mentioned ideas all refer to research in some way. A look on the related research results gives the impression that we only have snapshots of students' social science literacy and of teachers' views of social science education. Systematic investigations which focus on longitudinal research of students, teachers or teacher trainees or a complex study of the components of social science literacy (including knowledge, attitudes, values and skills) are needed to get valuable information of students' performance, teachers' practices, stimulating and hindering factors of social science education.

## 6 SUMMARY

All things considered; the following general trends of social science education can be summarized. Before the change of regime in 1989, strong ideology-driven education dominated the field. In the '90s the education policy started a reform to adjust the curriculum to the new democratic circumstances. However, the bad memories of the past, the different positions competing with each other about the direction of curriculum reform did not help the promotion of social science education. It became a subtopic of history teaching, which could be a positive advancement, but the integration was not prepared well. History education is struggling between different paradigms, furthermore history teacher trainees and teachers do not get proper support to teach social science topics. These circumstances result the bias: social science education is a declared educational goal but lacks the necessary conditions to actually implement it.

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## ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Students can start elementary school at the age of 6, however, till now parents had the right to decide (based on the suggestion of the kindergarten teacher) if they want to send their child to school or spend one more year in kindergarten. At this moment, the regulation is changing. Parents have to ask the Education Authority to let their child stay one more year in kindergarten.